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by selling the carcasses. There is a good deal that is grotesque and humorous in some of the scenes and characters described, but the book is terribly prolix.

## V.

## CONVENTIONAL CANT AS A BRITISH FAILING.

To search for national failings, even with the view of prescribing a remedy for them, is not the most agreeable or easy of tasks, but it is one that entitles a capable and earnest writer to attention and respect. In reading this book \* the American man may feel calmly judicial and sternly impartial. Except as he may have a share of British blood in *his* veins he may take these strictures with perfect coolness and even enjoy them. We can afford to take our time in discovering what an English author—for such we presume Mr. Whitman to be—has to say on a subject on which English people are usually a trifle sensitive. If it were an American who had written about the conventional faults of our trans-Atlantic cousins, we could readily anticipate what he might have to say, but for an Englishman to chastise the English is a very refreshing spectacle, and is calculated to awaken some little curiosity on this side of the world. There is a great deal in the book that is worthy of attention, and we hope that not only our English relatives, but some of our own people may profit by it.

The author does not, at the start, give a very precise definition of cant, but he distinguishes between the cant which is conventional and that which goes by the name of religious cant or hypocrisy, with which he does not deal. Before defining his subject he gives us an essay on pharisaism, or that insular pride in things English which peculiarly pervades the middle and untraveled classes. In this connection he makes a fling at English efforts to "convert" the heathen and the Jews, and at certain instances of foreign intermeddling, and he adds: "There are signs abroad that we are not so cocksure of our own excellence in everything as we used to be." This is very well for an Englishman, and very satisfactory to the rest of mankind, besides which it is expressed in a thoroughly English fashion, and our readers will no doubt say "Amen."

What do English people think of the expression "toadying debasement before rank and social power—one of the greatest blemishes of the English race?" This is pretty good!

As an instance of social cant, the author alludes to the practice of public speakers interlarding their speeches with Latin or Greek quotations. "These quotations are not meant for popular consumption; they are merely canting clap-trap, recalling references to the social position of the speakers and their hearers." There is a lesson for our future valedictorians! Another instance of cant is the peculiar way of pronouncing certain aristocratic family names. "That a man whose name is Marjoribanks should call himself Marchbanks—that Leveson Gower should be pronounced Lewson Gore, and Cholmondeley Chumley—would in any other country but England be suggestive of insanity." Then there is an aristocratic "coldness of manner," and a middle class "grin of amiability," and lastly a habit of self-depreciation with a gushing appreciation of others—all of which are stigmatized and rebuked, and which, we regret to say, are not peculiar to England.

As to manners, they are affected and artificial, with an awkward aiming at naturalness which does not, after all, succeed. A man is ashamed to say "my wife;" he must speak of her as Mrs. A. or Mrs. X. The best mannered people in

\* "Conventional Cant; its Results and Remedy." By Sidney Whitman. Kegan, Paul, Trench & Co.

England the author finds among policemen and railway officials. We cannot help asking where he would put a London "cabby," or the typical American conductor, the latter having a peculiarly national habit of ordering his passengers to "move on," and of punching them in the ribs for their fares. "Society in England, except that small cosmopolitan section which is almost international, is painful enough by its hollowness, its pretentiousness, its gush, its fetish-worship, but also more especially by its want of any intelligible code of manners." Mr. Whitman admits that in England people do not put their knives in their mouths,—many of us do in America,—but he thinks even that would be better than asking people to your home and not introducing them to each other.

Our author levels his lance against newspaper press cant, which praises John Stuart Mill and denounces Bradlaugh; and in passing he gives a slap at the inconsistency of burying Darwin, the agnostic, in Westminster, while an established clergyman cannot exchange pulpits with a dissenting minister. This latter, by the way, should come under a different heading, but the author thinks that the press is largely answerable for such an anomaly. There is a sarcasm about the mutual-admiration style of the English and American press at this particular period of the Victorian era. The author also regards the recent *Pall Mall Gazette* revelations as a stupendous instance of daring press-cant. Not to be beaten, we might, perhaps, add something about the American press and Jacob Sharp!

From the press to politics and principles is an easy transition, and something is said about the English diplomatic noble and "free trade." The author, however, is not hopeless of reformation for his country. He believes that the best way to begin to cure a disease is to begin to understand it, and he augurs in the growth of individualism among all classes a splendid possibility for the future. He suggests, however, that the national character may be drifting toward a cataclysm, out of which a new life, born of a new morality, shall make the past look like a hideous nightmare. So there is a very serious side to this bright and suggestive book.

## VI.

### AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

THERE is something to be learned from the story of any individual life, if truthfully told. The author of "Years of Experience" is a lady now in her seventieth year, and may, therefore, be justified in concluding that her life-work is sufficiently near its completion to make a calm review of it her special duty. Without setting forth any reasons for taking the public into her confidence she has made the public her debtor. No thoughtful person can read this modest autobiography without interest and profit, as showing the course of a self-reliant and intellectual woman, thrown early in life upon her own endeavors, and bravely holding her own through all adversities and difficulties. It is not so much, however, a story of material as of intellectual and spiritual experience, gathered under outward circumstances and associations that impart to it special interest. Born in England, with a mixture of aristocratic French blood in her veins, she finds herself while still a child rebelling in spirit against the current orthodox dogmas about the Deity, and through life she appears to have maintained her determination to accept nothing as authoritative in religion which offends her moral intuitions and conceptions. Circumstances caused her to emigrate, and in the course of a few years, after a brief residence in Canada, we find her a member of the community known as "The Brook Farm," and some of the most interesting pages of the book are occupied with her mental and spiritual experiences in connection with that short-lived en-

\* "Years of Experience: An Autobiographical Narrative." By Georgiana Bruce Kirby. G. P. Putnam's Sons.